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What We Are *Not* Doing to Uphold Training Standards

I would like to use this column as a forum to inform you of what we *are not doing* at the Armor Center to uphold training standards. We are *not doing* more with less, which in the training base normally means not meeting the standards for training soldiers or building leaders.

Training to standard is not an option — it is a requirement. The fact is we were not meeting the standard in all cases. It was not because of careless or negligent leaders, it was because training was not our first priority, and we were living outside our means. We did more with less, and did our best to meet standards.

With our Army at war, it is more important than ever for soldiers to leave the training base prepared to join their first unit of assignment in a combat zone. While supporting the war effort, training to standard is now clearly job one in the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), and at the U.S. Army Armor Center. With the guidance and support of the TRADOC Commanding General, General Byrnes, we are not conducting training that we cannot conduct to standard. This is not a luxury — this is about standards and not sending unprepared soldiers and leaders to units.

Simply put, we are aligning priorities and resources, and making conscious, well-informed decisions to cancel or delay training that does not meet standards. Additionally, we have delayed updates and developing certain training and doctrine

publications. This process has been under the microscope to ensure efficient and effective use of every resource as part of each decision.

To state the obvious, the primary reason for not training to standard is lack of resources — primarily people. Many are simply not assigned here, they are filling critical requirements in the field, and some are tasked from Fort Knox to support other Army missions in combat zones.

You deserve to know the details. From May through September, we cancelled or reduced the load for the Senior Officer Logistics Management Course (56 officers not trained); the Cavalry Leader Course (46 students not trained); the Scout Leader Course (22 students not trained and potentially 29 more not trained); the Armor Captains Career Course (delayed for at least 73 captains); M1A2 additional skill identifier—9K10 K4 (189 students not trained); M3A3 Cavalry Fighting Vehicle Operator's Course (108 students not trained); and the Tank Commander's Certification Course (117 students not trained). We have delayed developing courses for reconnaissance vehicle crewmen, mobile gun system crewmen, leaders, and master gunners, as well as M3A3 scout certification until May 2004. We also delayed development of several training and evaluation program manuals.

These actions obviously impact the force. However, assigning unprepared and untrained soldiers to a unit fails the soldier,

the force, and our professional and moral standards.

The news is not all bad — in fact, it has gotten much better. These actions have extremely positive results. First, we are beginning to meet our mission to provide trained and ready soldiers and leaders to the field. Second, we are giving our great officers, noncommissioned officers, civilians, and contractors the best chance of accomplishing their missions to standard. Third, this is a forcing function that is working to bring resources to the training base.

With General Byrnes' active involvement and support, we are finding solutions to some of these issues. Examples include hiring contract support for missions such as teaching basic common skills tasks, training development, writing field manuals and training and evaluation programs, as well as working on Stryker and Objective Force requirements. The Armor branch has first-rate officers and noncommissioned officers assigned to the Armor Center as small group instructors and trainers.

This is a pretty fundamental change, which started with TRADOC establishing and supporting training as its first priority in supporting the war. The situation improves every day and there is light at the end of the tunnel. I pledge to conduct training to standard at Fort Knox and provide the best soldiers and leaders to the world's finest Mounted Force.

FORGE THE THUNDERBOLT!